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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002923

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: IECI AUGUST VOTER REGISTRATION LIKELY TO BE  
DELAYED AND UPSET BARZANI

REF: BAGHDAD 2495

Classified By: Political Counselor Robert Ford.  
Reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

1. (C) Summary. Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq Chief Electoral Officer Allami believes the start of the voter registration update period might be delayed until August 7. IECI is experienced in handling slight delays in schedule, so this one-week delay should not pose a serious threat to the rest of the electoral timeline. The referendum law is likely to pass shortly; the Transitional National Assembly discussed the two-page draft law prepared by its legal committee on July 11. The 107,000 people, mostly Kurds, who registered in Kirkuk January 17-25 under an exceptional provision, will have to formally reregister during the August update exercise to participate in the upcoming referendum and December elections. This requirement will likely irk Barzani. We will work closely with Barzani to win his cooperation so Kirkuk avoids a Kurdish boycott. End Summary.

Slight Delay Expected  
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2. (C) Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Allami confirmed to PolOff on July 10 that the IECI might need to postpone the voter registration update period. In the worst case, he said, IECI would delay the start of the registration period until August 7 and shorten the period from four weeks to three weeks. He cited delays in signing contracts for printing, logistics support and public outreach/media campaigns as the main reasons for the possible delay. So far, only the contract for printing of voter lists has been signed.

3. (C) Security preparations to protect approximately 550 voter registration centers seem to be picking up after a slow start. At last week's interagency meeting on elections security, a representative from the Ministry of Defense declared that MOD intends to provide specialized training for its troops guarding the centers. IECI CEO Allami hopes to make significant progress on security coordination during an upcoming July 14 IECI nation-wide meeting that will include participation from 18 IECI governorate directors and their security counterparts. Like the January elections, Allami said that security conditions in Anbar and Ninewah would determine whether IECI would be able to open registration centers in those provinces. He said the majority of centers would be in schools and staffed largely by teachers. (Comment: Not opening the centers in Anbar could discourage Sunni Arab participation in the political process. And, if centers do not open in Ninewah, the Christian community may accuse the IECI of bias against them. RefTel describes the voter registration update program in more detail. End Comment.)

Referendum Law  
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4. (C) The referendum law seems likely to pass shortly; the Transitional National Assembly (TNA) discussed for the first time the draft law prepared by its Legal Committee on July 11. IECI Commissioner Hamdia (strictly protect) has been unofficially advising the Legal Committee responsible for drafting the law and, she has widely consulted with international electoral experts. Although unlikely, the current draft may still undergo changes as issues are deliberated. For example, in a July 10 consultation meeting with the Legal Committee, Hamdia had to explain that the Out-of-Country voting for the referendum is not possible under the TAL.

5. (C) The two-page draft referendum law under consideration by the TNA formally authorizes the IECI to implement the referendum and certify the results. It clarifies that those having been born on or before 31 December 1987 are eligible to vote. Additionally,

the draft states that the question in the referendum ballot will be "Do agree on the draft of the ballot or not." The draft law referendum law is brief because it refers to CPA order 92 (Creation of IECI) and Article 11 of the TAL (Iraqi citizenship).

"Reregister" 107,000 Kirkuk Kurds?  
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16. (C) According to IECI Commissioner Safwat (a Kurd), those who were allowed to same-day register and vote on January 30, as well as the 107,000 people, mostly Kurds, who registered in Kirkuk January 17-25 under an exceptional provision, must formally register during the August update exercise to participate in the upcoming referendum and December election. Safwat said that it was never intended for the exceptional registration cases to be added permanently to the voter roll. In the case of Kirkuk, Safwat explained that the last-minute solution to avoid a Kirkuk provincial council election boycott by the KDP and PUK leadership led to the agreement that the IECI would accept the 1957 census document as an acceptable identity document for the large number of mostly undocumented Kurds who claimed to be Kirkuk residents. The 1957 census is considered accurate and took place before Saddam Hussein's Arabization program, said Safwat.

17. (C) However, Safwat continued, 1957 census documents are not widely available and obtaining them is problematic, implying that many of the 107,000 who registered in January unlikely had authentic 1957 census documents. To avoid a similar situation, Safwat has been advising Kirkuk leaders that authentic identity papers will be strictly required during the upcoming August registration period. Safwat said that the Ministry of Interior (MOI) is in possession of 1957 census documents and, to avoid another crisis in Kirkuk, he asked Poloff to quietly press the MOI to make them available to Kirkuk residents.

18. (C) In a separate meeting, former IFES team leader to the IECI Jarret Blanc agreed with Poloff that the Kurdish registration issue in Kirkuk could potentially be contentious and misunderstood. He suggested a vigorous IECI public awareness campaign, specially targeting and encouraging the 107,000 Kirkuk residents to reregister in August, was in order. At the same time, Kurdish leader Masood Barzani should be approached to win his cooperation, opined Blanc.

19. (C) Comment. Delays in the return of the Board of Commissioners and key administrative staffers after their meeting with UN/EAD Pirelli in Amman (10 days total outside of Iraq) did not help IECI to meet its recent deadlines. However, minor delays in the schedule are nothing new for IECI, and this slight postponement should not adversely affect overall electoral preparations. IECI CEO Allami seems confident that the registration period could be shortened in the event of a delay, but the Board of Commissioners may decide to extend the registration period into September, causing pressures to reduce time periods on other electoral events that follow - including the exhibition and challenges period. In December 2004, Masood Barzani was dissatisfied with the Kurdish voter registration process and this was one of the factors leading to his threat to withdraw from the Kirkuk local elections. Looking ahead to the constitution referendum, the "second" registration of 107,000 Kirkuk, mostly Kurdish "residents" will likely upset Barzani. Barzani could well complain about people having to register again. We will work closely with him to win his early cooperation so Kirkuk avoids a possible Kurdish boycott of the re-registration process. End Comment.

10. (U) REO HILLAH, REO BASRAH, REO MOSUL, and REO KIRKUK, minimize considered.

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